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The Emergence of New Regions in the Transition Romania

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1. Introduction

The emergence of regions, the regionalisation of space and society, the reworking of territorial and social structures are undoubtedly strongly connected to the development of society. Social theories explaining social transformation become in this context vital, but it is quite difficult to theorise the new spatiality in transition countries like Romania and therefore we can note the first major problem which affects the analysis of socio-spatial phenomena. Some authors were seeking to theorise transition in Romania, J. Häkli (1994), D. Sandu (1996, 1999), V. Pasti *et. al.* (1997), W. Heller (1998), J. Pickels and A. Smith (1998), Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley (2001), and D. Chiribuca (2004), but the regional dimension of the transition has still remained an under-researched issue.

The second major problem faced by regional and societal analysis concerns the marginal position of regional geography in Romania during the communism. First and to the same time the last human-geographic regionalisation in the communist period was undertaken in the geographical monography of Romania called *Monografia geografică a RPR* (1960). In addition the regional geography has been reduced on physical regional geography, where natural regions were exterior, absolute given and politically neutral. After 1989 the role of natural criteria based regionalisation has been generally reduced but many recent human-regional empirical works are taking over unreflected pre-given natural boundaries from which the most prominent and frequently are the river valleys and the structural contacts between mountains, hills and plains (Benedek, 1998). This situation was not only paradigmatic determined, like, for instance, in Western regional geography dominated long time by nomothetic and quantitative oriented research (Werlen, 1997, Wood, 2000), but was the influence of a specific ideology and research strategy developed during the communist period. Therefore some research themes became tabu, like ethnical and social differentiation and

segregation or the regional and cultural geography. During the communist period regional geography has been seen more as an integrative discipline for both natural and human knowledge about the space. This had resulted in an emphasis on the research on regional monographies, in form of geographical county presentations, touristical monographies, the series of mountains monographies, or even by settlement monographies (Benedek, 1998). A characteristic of recent regional geography is on one hand the still monographic character, accompanied by little theoretical and conceptual-methodological debate on this topic. But on the other hand we can notice a huge and growing concern and active implication after 1989 in other forms of space- and society regionalisations represented by political-normative and positiv-scientific regionalisations, which may be viewed as part of the instrumentalisation of economic, political and social transformation, and which has been lead to the construction of new regionalisations in Romania after 1989. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to present and to examine new modes of recent region formation in Romania, constructed under the conditions of the after 1989 beginning transition processes from a socialist, planned economy and one-party system to a democratic and market economy system.

Irrespective of whether the region is regarded as a construct or as an entity with material existence, the question of the border emerges, that is: how is a region delimited. The situation is easier if the borders are present normatively: political borders (states) and administrative borders (sub-national level). These borders are often the results of scientific investigations, where the basic method consists of the selection of one or more statistic variables, the values of which are grouped into classes, and subsequently the borders of the classes are charted on the map. Substantial difficulties emerge at the delimitation of regions that are regarded as social constructs, the central category of which is the identity. Regardless of the method applied, the regions are to a certain extent methodological construct (Weichart, 1996). This means that their precise borderline is determined by the chosen delimitation method, and therefore the region is to a great extent a methodological construct.

Ansti Paasi's theory (1995) overcomes the above methodological dilemma and regards regions as human and social categories, which developed in four phases:

- the assumption of territorial shape,
- the formation of institutional shape,
- the formation of conceptual (symbolic) shape,
- the establishment of regions as entities and social consciousness of the society.

In the first phase, the social practice leading to the determination of the region's borders is developed. The delimitation of regions is regarded by Paasi to be a crucial moment in the

construction of the region, because it is at the same time the basis for the following phases and the prerequisite for the development of a regional consciousness. The second phase corresponds to the development of territorial symbols such as the name of the region, which reflects the connection between the image of the region, the regional consciousness and the concept of outsiders in relation to the region. The function of the symbols is the legitimisation of a particular local value of a region with its specific values, standards, identities and roles. These can develop either locally or translocally, depending on the characteristics of the political power relations. The third phase runs simultaneously with the second one and consists in the development of regional institutions. Paasi attributes a key role to these institutions in the reproduction of the regional consciousness and of the region itself. This process is very strongly connected with the political and economic transformation of a society. In the last phase, the region is assigned a clear role in the society, it is established as an entity and recognised as such by the society. These four phases do not have to follow each other chronologically, they can take place at the same time or in different successions. In the following the analysis will proceed according to Paasi's approach, emphasising the emergence and the role of regional institutions.

2. Regionalisations and region building in the transition period

One new regional formation of the transition period is a political construction with large geographical support (political-normative regionalisation). It illustrates the way in which social or political actions of powerful actors are creating spaces. The political construction of regions was determined by external factors linked to the EU integration process of Romania, which claims the establishment of a regional policy and development system. It is the ruling idea of the political class in Romania, that only with the radical change or substitution of the communist political system with a democratic, multiparty system and the change of economic system will automatic lead to better living standards and economic wellbeing. Therefore, in 1998 the law no. 151 on regional development in Romania (replaced recently by the law no. 315/2004) has established the institutional framework, objectives, competences and instruments of the regional development in Romania.

[Fig. 1. The Development Regions in Romania]



1. North-East, 2. South-East, 3. South-Muntenia 4. South-West Oltenia,
5. West, 6. North-West, 7. Center, 8. Bucharest-Ilfov

The evaluation of the regionalisations in Romania follows Ansti Paasi's theory on the formation of regions (1995). Based on the comparison with Paasi's scheme, we can assess that the political-normative regionalisations of the Romanian society after 1989 are accomplished partially through the same phases as seen in Paasi's model. But this stages has a different succetion and a modified content according to the influence of different and specific macrosocial- and spatial structures of the romanian society.

The assumption of territorial shape

At first sight the shape of political-normative regionalisation implemented in Romania is a new one, it never existed in this form before. But by further examination we have concluded already that it reproduces the cultural dividing line represented by the Carpathian Mountains between the "western provinces" of Romania (Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş) and the "heartland provinces" of modern romanian state (Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea). But a closer look reveals that the borders of the development regions replicate the large demarcation line represented by the Carpathians between the "western provinces" of

Romania (Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș) and the “heartland provinces” of the modern Romanian State (Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea). This cultural division line resulted from the fact that the “western provinces” developed until 1918 within a different political-cultural framework (Kingdom of Hungary, Principality of Transylvania, Habsburg Monarchy, Austria-Hungarian monarchy) than the “heartland provinces” (vassals of the Ottoman empire until 1859). However, we already mentioned that this cultural demarcation line, which was very clear at the beginning the 20th century, became less evident during the last century, due to the modernisation policy of the Romanian State.

The territorial shape created is a fixe one, given to the regional development laws from 1998 and 2004, which represents the normative foundation of the new regions. The boundaries of the new regions are following the boundaries of the counties and of the Municipality of Bucharest.

The law no. 315/2004 allows to counties situated in different development regions to build associations for the solving of common problems. Territorially it has created a regional level - without jurisdictional personality, it means, that they are not administrativ-territorial units - by the multicriterial grouping of counties¹ in eight **development regions** (regiuni de dezvoltare) (fig. 1), correspondent to the EU NUTS 2 level. They have a framework function for the establishment, implementation and evaluation of regional development policies, as well a technical function as basic territorial units for the collection of specific statistical data in conformity to the EUROSTAT reglementations.

One technical aspect concerning the NUTS system was not regulated yet, namely how the NUTS-1 level is formed. Romania is a middle-sized country in European terms, therefore it should consist of more than one units at the highest NUTS-level, but the number and the criteria for the grouping of development regions are not specified yet.

In the following, the eight development regions will be presented briefly (Table 1):

- Development region 1 Northeast has the largest territory and the largest population (about 3.6 million). The majority of its development indicators have low values;
- Development region 2 Southeast is the most heterogeneous region from cultural point of view, comprising two counties from Moldova, two from Muntenia and two from Dobrogea. The region also shows low cohesion regarding transportation routes, and its indicators are around the country average values;

¹ Counties (județe) are administrativ-territorial units of Romania, situated between the state level and the level of localities (local administrations). Romania is subdivided in 41 counties plus the Municipium of Bucharest.

- Development region 3 South Muntenia lies around the capital Bucharest. Its development indicators place it on the next to last place in the country, due to its dual territory structure: in the north there are economically developed counties (Prahova, Argeş, Dâmboviţa), while four underdeveloped counties in the south pull down the overall level of the region;
- Development region 4 Southwest Oltenia comprises the counties of the historical province Oltenia, and is on the same development level as region Southeast;
- Development region 5 West comprises the historical region Banat and county Hunedoara. After Bucharest it is the most developed region of Romania;
- Development region 6 Northwest has a better position in the development hierarchy of the country than development regions Southwest and Southeast, but is behind the regions West and Centre, because it contains two small counties that have the lowest development indicators in the Western provinces: Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud;
- Development region 7 Centre comprises exclusively Transylvanian counties and follows immediately after regions Bucharest and West regarding the development level;
- Development region 8 Bucharest-Ilfov comprises the capital Bucharest and county Ilfov, it is the economical growth centre of Romania, a situation that is structurally limited, since this development region has a very small surface.

The formation of institutional shape

The new development regions were instrumentalised (PAASI's phase 3) by creating a new institutional network for the administration of this spatial units: the National Agency for Regional Development as coordonating institution of the eight Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), the National Development Council and eighth Regional Development Councils as representative and desicional institutions.

In the future there will be changes both in the institutional and in the territorial system of the development regions (Veress, 2005).

The formation of conceptual (symbolic) shape

It is the stage II by Paasi, representing in our scheme the third one. The symbolic shape of development regions is partially incorporated in the historical and social consciousness of the regions. There was little effort by the state in establishing new territorial symbols or by reflecting the already existing ones. In this order the state has not established clear symbolic marks for the constructed regions. This is visible, for instance, in the names of the regions,

which designate the geographical position of the respective development regions within Romania (Northeast, Southeast, West, Centre and Northwest). Only three of them reflect the historical-cultural background as well: Southwest-Oltenia, South-Muntenia and Bucharest-Ilfov). This can also be explained by the fact that the other regions also contain parts of other historical regions.

In connection with a region-related symbolism, the meaning of cultural regions is still an open question, yet to be studied through empirical investigations. Behind this also lies the question, to what extent a regional consciousness connected with it was changed in the socialist past and the following transition period. Mungiu PIPPIDI (1999) writes that the regional consciousness is strongly pronounced in Transylvania and in the western parts of Romania (Banat, Crişana and Maramureş), while the other regions were very strongly homogenised. She also remarks however, that one could hardly prove the existence of a Transylvanian consciousness and of a Transylvanian identity. Rather than that, the ethnic identity is transcended and appears in two parallel identities: a Transylvanian Romanian and a Transylvanian Hungarian identity. Transylvanism, as a trans-ethnic intellectual movement of the period between the two world wars, emphasising the Transylvanian identity, offered for the first time an alternative to the dominating traditional ethnocentric national paradigm (Gábor, 1999). Its basis was that the identities and ideologies of Transylvanian Hungarians, Romanians and Germans are compatible with one another. It is to be seen as a cultural regionalism that soon had to redefine itself because of its rejection by the majority of the Romanian elite, which continued to considering the nation to be the central element of the state (id.). But its ideas regarding the redefinition of the identity of Hungarians in Transylvania have visible implications even today.

It is a future task to see the effects of the new division of labour under socialist and transition rules on the content of regional consciousness. Lacking in empirical evidences we can only hypothetically assume that the importance of socio-spatial processes in the past half century like massive industrialisation and urbanisation, accompanied by massive inner-regional and rural-urban migration, bringing together in towns populations with different cultural backgrounds, and massive emigration of some ethnic groups like jews and germans. This processes have reshaped the regional identity and created new kinds of “feeling together” which may be in contradiction to traditional regional identities. This issue is the more important because of the fact that regional identity is used as an endogenous resource for the support of regional interests, agendas, as well as for political actions. Thus, the position of the region should be strengthened both politically and economically. We differentiate between the

instrumental mobilisation of the regional identity in the form of regional development strategies for the strengthening of the regional competitiveness, and the political mobilisation of the regional identity, where the latter alone defines the objectives of regional development (Lagendijk, 2001). In Romania, regionalisation tries to implement an instrumental mobilisation (not declaratively but rather by definition), but the cultural heterogeneity of the development regions poses a significant obstacle. In addition, the massive industrialisation and urbanisation, accompanied by strong inter-regional and rural-urban migrations brought together different cultures in larger cities such as Braşov or Sibiu. The loss of certain ethnic groups like Jews and Romanian Germans, led to a substantial transformation of regional identities. This pronounced demographic change brought about new forms of common identity, which are in some places surely in contrast with the traditional regional identities. It is certain that the regional identity in Transylvania competes with ethnic identity (Pippidi, 1999). This is noticeable in the ethnicisation of the political voting pattern, although at the local elections in 2004 the voting was trans-ethnic in many localities of Transylvania (see Sibiu as early as 2000, with the later addition in 2004 of Cîsnădie, Mediaş, Jimbolia, Satu Mare, Reghin). This development stresses again the enormous influence of external factors like the EU integration on the democratisation of the internal political life. Mungiu Pippidi (1999) notes also that the regional consciousness is expressed clearly by transilvanians and people from the western part of Romania (Banat, Crişana and Maramureş), while the other regions became very homogenous regarding this aspect. She also notes that there is no transilvanian consciousness which transcends ethnical identity and argues for the parallel existence of transilvanian romanian consciousness more less active than the second one of transilvanian hungarian consciousness.

It is shore that the political regionalisation of national space had instrumentalised the regional differences by shaping and aligning their boundaries to those of cultural-historical regions. The only exception is the already mentioned South-East region, inside which the regional disparities are much smaller as between Transylvania (Centre Region) and Moldavia (North-East Region) for instance. Given this broad correspondence to the cultural-historical regions, the new regions are already partially basis for social classifications.

The establishment of regions as entities and social consciousness of the society

The development of regions as entities and as social consciousness of the society (PAASI's phase 4) takes place in the Romanian society simultaneously with the third phase of the generalisation pattern. In this sense two phases of PAASI's model are overlapping. This

situation results from the unclear function and role of the emerging regional units of Romania. For the development regions, these functions are already relatively clearly defined, however, in comparison with the significance of regions in the practice of certain EU member states, their functions are very limited. For instance, the Romanian regions have very small funds at their disposal, have no legal competencies and are subordinated to the National Regional Development Council led by the current Prime Minister.

Critical points of the regionalisation

There are three fundamental issues regarding the new political regionalisation (see also Horváth, Veress, 2003, Veress, 2005). On the one hand, the regionalisation criteria are very controversial in both political and scientific circles and were not implemented consistently. The creation of regions was based on four main criteria: total population, surface area, as well as cultural and economic integration. Compared to the EU average, the Romanian development regions are however too large in terms of their total population and surface. One of the regions is culturally very heterogeneous (Southeast) and in several cases the county representatives demand the reassignment of their county due to economic interdependence with counties assigned to other regions. This interdependence developed in some cases only in the past 20-30 years, but the new regionalisation barely takes them into account. Demands of this kind come e.g. from county Braşov in the development region Centre, because it has strong economic relations and interests in a development axis through the Prahova valley to Bucharest, or counties Prahova and Dâmboviţa, which belong to region South, but have a very low level of cohesion with it. In the same time the two counties where the Hungarians build the majority of the population (Harghita, Covasna) there is a growing tendency into the direction of the thematisation of the autonomy question, political representatives of this minority proposing a separate development region for these two counties. Different suggestions regarding the regrouping of the counties into development regions in place of the current one have been formulated (Benedek, 2004, Săgeată, 2004). With the law no. 315/2004, the discussion over the number of regions and the affiliation of individual counties was closed for a longer period of time. Romania will join the EU with the existing eight development regions and a change is difficult to envisage, because these form the territorial basis for the EUROSTAT.

On the other hand, unlike some regionalisation models in Europe (Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium or Switzerland), but similarly to others (France, Portugal, Greece etc.), the regions in Romania have very limited decision-making authority and are financially weak.

They are practically subordinated to the government that distributes the funds to the regions; a situation that is reminiscent of that of the French regions in the 1970s and 1980s. The new political-normative regionalisation is oriented top to bottom and is the result of a very limited round of consultations. Practically, the law took over the suggestions of a team of experts that elaborated the document called the “Green Charter of regional development in Romania” in 1997.

Finally, the regional policy pursued in the development regions uses keynesian instruments, like revenue redistribution, direct subsidy to businesses based in less favoured areas (“zone defavorizate”) identified by the regional development offices and certified by the government, through financial facilities, indirect assistance of businesses by public investments into the territorial infrastructure of the less favoured areas. On the one hand, the keynesian instruments were replaced in the EU to a large extent by development instruments of the new regionalism, on the other hand the results of the implementation of these instruments are not spectacular in Romania: the productivity in the less favoured areas remained low and they remained dependent on other, innovative areas (Benedek, 2004). Additionally, after the accession to the EU the direct instruments will be cancelled, since they are not compatible with the EU policies regarding business competition. By the way, the new regional development law does not specify the competence of the regional development offices to identify further less favoured areas.

3. The Regionalism in Romania

On this analysis level different dimensions of regionalisation and regionalism meet. The latter is understood as an ideological movement that supports the primacy of regional values. Generally speaking, regionalism refers to the behaviour of different territorial units (regions, settlements) in relation to the external world or an outside authority. The sub-national levels practically define themselves thereby, through their relationship with the central power of the state.

In case of Romania we can assume that the regionalisation was not prompted by an active regionalism. In doing so, we examine the groups that formulated regionalism as an ideology and/or have used regionalism as a means for the mobilisation of the population. This is what the basic question regarding the forms of regionalism is connected to. Which ones dominate and how are they distributed territorially and/or distinguishable from each other? The goals and discourse, as well as the role and influence of different regionalistic groups are examined.

[Fig. 2. The cultural-historical regions on Romania]



The question of regional identity also has to be addressed here. In this essay this will be limited to the evaluation and problematisation of already existing investigations. Furthermore, it is to be determined whether regionalism is anchored in the strong interregional economic mismatches, or whether it only reflects culture-based differences.

The analysis was facilitated by the publication of a chronology of regionalism in Romania, compiled by Miklós Bakk (Bakk, 2003). This was supplemented by the evaluation of newspaper articles and comments on this topic and by the evaluation of the election results.

Political regionalism

Based on this investigation, the following institutions (political parties and movements) of regionalism were identified:

- the Party of Moldovans² from Romania (“Partidul Moldovenilor din România”);
- the efforts of Sabin Gherman to reach a broad electorate for his regional party;
- the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR);

² The cultural-historical region of Moldova is meant here, integral part of the actual Romanian state, located in the eastern part of the country (Iasi is the most important centre) and not the political formation called the Republic of Moldova, created in the 1990’s after the demise of the Soviet Union (with the capital in Chişinău).

- the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (“Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács”, EMNT), the Szekler National Council (“Székely Nemzeti Tanács”, SZNT), Hungarian Civic Alliance (“Magyar Polgári Szövetség”, MPSZ)

The party of Moldovans from Romania was a political initiative in Moldova (the poorest region of the country), established in 1997, which collected 75,266 votes at the local elections of 2000 (1.05% of the total number of votes in Romania) and gave the mayor of the regional centre Iași. It existed only for a short time: in 2001 it merged with the governing social-democratic party (Partidul Democrației Sociale).

Sabin Gherman has tried to use his ideas on regionalisation (Gherman, 2003) in politics, but without success. The Christian Democratic Party (Partidul Creștin Democrat) obtained very poor results at the last local elections: they gave a total of 17 local counsellors ("consilieri locali") in the whole country.

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania formulated the issue of territorial autonomy in its program in 1993 as a declared goal. After the Alliance became a government party in 1996, and then in the period between 2000-2004 operated as an ally of the government party at that time (PSD), this goal was removed from the agenda of political action. Segments of the Hungarian population that were dissatisfied with the alleged deviation of the leadership of the democratic forum of Hungarians in Romania, established a new organisation in 2003, under the leadership of pastor László Tőkés: the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (“Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács”, EMNT). In the same year the Szekler National Council (“Székely Nemzeti Tanács”, SZNT) was established, while the Hungarian Civic Alliance (“Magyar Polgári Szövetség”, MPSZ) declared its intention to be registered as a political party and present themselves as an alternative to the DAHR for the ethnic Hungarian voters. A prominent goal of the EMNT, SZNT and MPSZ is the territorial autonomy of Szeklerland, they are therefore the most active group of political regionalism, but not the most successful one: they do not have a political weight. They submitted a draft law regarding the autonomy of Szeklerland to the parliament in 2004. Originally, an autonomy project was elaborated by the group around Miklós Bakk. It is a draft with three topics: a) a skeleton law regarding the regions, with emphasis on the mechanisms of operation, competencies and institutions, without territorial references, which later on should be regulated by a special law, as a result of political compromise; b) a bill concerning the establishment of the Szeklerland region; c) a bill concerning the status of the Szeklerland region. The SZNT adopted the last two points in its own autonomy project, reformulated and integrated them into Jozsef Csapó’s earlier draft (1995) and submitted this to the parliament.

The project was rejected by the majority - including the DAHR representatives, with the exception of a group of five members of the Parliament.

Cultural Regionalism

The cultural differences between the different historical provinces are visible at the borders along the large cultural-historical demarcation lines within Romania (Transylvania vs. Old Romania), which, despite the more progressive westernisation of Transylvania, does not act as a chasm between civilisations in the sense of Huntington (Capelle-Pogăcean, 1998). However, the cultural particularities have been sparsely documented empirically after the change of regime, i.e. the end of the socialist modernisation. They are always historicised in expressions like “amprenta trecutului” (fingerprint of the past), meaning the history, the different past that shaped the mentality and the architecture differently (Capelle-Pogăcean, 1998). Besides, the cultural differences are relativised by the integration processes. The cultural differences in the country are very well illustrated by the voting habits of the population. Especially in 1996, Transylvania and other western provinces played a crucial role in the change of political course, which has been oscillating between East and West. In these provinces, the opposition parties around the Democratic Convention of the time clearly won the elections, while in Old Romania they could only establish themselves in the large cities. Likewise, the options were very clearly regionally differentiated at the presidential elections: the majority of the western provinces voted for the candidate of the opposition (Emil Constantinescu), who thereby became the president, while Ion Iliescu had the upper hand in Old Romania. Since 1996, the options of Romania were formulated clearly in favour of the Euro-Atlantic integration. Again, at the elections in 2000, the results were very differentiated regionally. Additionally, the western provinces are much more politically fragmented and continue to be a stronghold of the opposition parties, as well as that of the ethnic parties like the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania (DFDR) and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), while at the presidential elections, in contrast to Old Romania, the Transylvanians voted very strongly for the nationalist-extremist candidate C.V. Tudor.

The development regions established in the course of regionalisation reproduced the above-mentioned political and cultural differences. The only exception is the already mentioned Southeast region, the internal cultural cohesion of which is however much stronger than that between Transylvania (Centre region) and Moldova (Northeast region). In this correlation

between the current development regions and the cultural-historical regions there can already be a basis for social classifications of the future.

The cultural dimension of regionalism is also manifested in the isolated efforts of groups of intellectuals around the magazines “**Altera**” (published in Târgu Mureş) and “**Provincia**” (published in Cluj). The common trait of these efforts is that it is hard to classify them as regionalism. In contrast to regionalisation, which functions as a compromise of the elite, regionalism needs a broad basis, it is usually a mass movement. In Romania neither part of the cultural elite, nor the different political regionalisms can boast a mass character. The first issue of “**Altera**” was published in 1995, and according to its publishers (Liga PRO EUROPA, a non-governmental organisation) it aimed to be a discussion forum, a mediator, that informs and forms at the same time, at a time when there was no political will for the harmonisation of the relationship between the majority and minorities (Altera, no. 1/1995, “Editorial”). In my opinion it has started to build a new public discourse parallel to the discourses dominated by centralism and ethnicity of the time. Numerous essays, analyses and documents were published on their pages (many as translations) on themes like autonomy, human rights, collective rights, ethnic relations, federalism and decentralisation, multi- and interculturalism etc. The second regionalistic publication, “**Provincia**”, had a very short existence (2000-2002), was bilingual and started as a monthly supplement of the Romanian newspaper “Ziua de Ardeal” and the Hungarian newspaper “Kronika”. It gathered a group of Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals (mainly writers, journalists, essayists, philosophers and historians) who wanted to overcome the national dimension of regionalism. The newspaper identified, pointed out and stressed the values of the Transylvanian regional identity: tolerance, multiculturalism etc., not as a form of regional mysticism but as a post-national discourse and as a form of regional communication. “Provincia”, like “Altera”, defined itself as a discussion forum, with emphasis on the Transylvanians anchored into the present and oriented towards the future.

Economic Regionalism

The cultural-historical regions do not only have a strong cultural dimension - which is also reflected in the political voting pattern - but they also correspond to interregional economic disparities, which were still large in 1920, but were reduced by the planned economy (Popescu, 1994, Vincze, 2000, Voineagu et col., 2002). After 1989, as a consequence of the opening of the Romanian economy and its integration into global production and consumer networks, the interregional economic disparities have grown again (Benedek, 2004). The

reaction of the Romanian regions to the new political and economical frameworks was differentiated, according to their economic capabilities, their competitiveness and institutional networks. The winners of the transition are the urban agglomerations with a developed service sector, the coastal region and the border regions along the western state border of Romania, while the isolated mountain regions, the rural regions and the heavy industry regions are among the losers (id.). The regional distribution of the development indicators (Table 1) shows that the cultural background is yet another important factor of the regional development in Romania. The pole of underdevelopment is still Moldova (the development region Northeast), Dobrogea, Muntenia and Oltenia (the development regions Southeast, South and Southwest) are on a medium level, while Transylvania, Banat, Crişana (the development regions Centre, West and Northwest), together with Bucharest, form the development pole of the country (id.). Nevertheless, I would like to stress here that the differences are no longer as great as they were one hundred years ago; they lie - depending on the measured dimensions - between 1,5 (GDP/inhabitants) and 2,5 (household equipment). At present, the greatest development differences in Romania are not interregional but rather between settlement categories (towns and countryside). In addition to this, Bucharest is without doubt the strongest economical region of the country.

Table 1. The basic data of the development regions

Region	Surface (qkm)	Population 2002	Urbanisation (%) 2002	Poverty (%) 2001	Infant Mortality (‰) 1999
Nord-Est	36 850	3 685 393	40,6	42,8	20,9
Sud-Est	35 762	2 852 480	54,6	35,3	20,1
Sud	34 453	3 380 516	39,7	35,7	19,6
Sud-Vest	29 212	2 332 194	43,8	31,4	17,2
Vest	32 034	1 959 985	60,9	30	16
Nord- Vest	34 159	2 744 008	51,1	30,1	19,7
Centru	34 100	2 521 745	58,3	34,2	16,9
Bucureşti	1 821	2 221 860	87,9	23,1	12,9
Romania	238391	21 698 181	52,7	34	18,6

Source: Recensământul populaţiei şi locuinţelor din 2002. Date preliminare; Carta Verde. Politica de Dezvoltare Regională în România (1997).

Hence it is a particularity of the Romanian society that the supporters of political regionalism are not the transition's winning regions. To this contributes the fact that the territorial structure of Romania is dominated by a politically strong and at the same time economically dynamic centre, Bucharest. The economic distance from Bucharest is then used as mobilisation factor against the centre for the explanation of one's own weaknesses. The most active regionalism is concentrated in the central regions (Harghita and Covasna counties), dominated by the Hungarian population, with a lower development level, where the political autonomy is seen as the best way for economic improvement. Other regionalistic groups have a lower influence.

4. Conclusions

The chapter about the **regionalism** in Romania had shown that after the change of regime in 1989, regionalism did not actually appeared in an active form. The reasons for this are various.

First, we assist to the gradual dissolution of the multicultural society and the development of an ethnic model polarised by Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania. Large parts of the german and jewish minority outmigrated from Romania, while the share of the Romanians have risen from 77,8% in 1930 to 89,4% at the last census held in 2002. The ethnicisation of the regionalism in Romania and the above mentioned demographic processes left the question of regionalism to be reduced on a bipolarised dispute between the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority.

Second, a small part of the Romanian and Hungarian cultural elite has tried to promote a kind of passiv regionalism; their ideas become either isolated than widely diffused. On the pages of the newly grounded newsletter "Provincia" they have outlined the idea of a trans-ethnic regional party, but could not implement it and preferred the necessity of regionalism remaining in the context of civil society. A key role is attributed to Transylvania in the modernisation and European integration of the country. From this, according to many authors (e.g. Smaranda Enache) results the necessity of an effective regionalisation, which could lead to the strengthening of regional centres, through which the possible deviations could be balanced before the Euro-Atlantic integration. The western provinces of Romania were to remain the driving force of the integration.

And third, the public discourse catalogues every attempt to speak about the regional dimension of the state as separatism or as a dangerous topic, which could have negative influences on the future political development of the whole country. An ideological and patriotic exclusivism is practiced (Fati, 1999). Regional diversity represents a threat, because it symbolises fragmentation (Chelcea, 1999). Therefore the regionalisms, which are to be credited to several regional groups, remained passive to a large extent. The nation remains the fundamental element of the structure of society.

What concerns the **regionalisation**, the conceptual system changes at present very fast both in politics and in science. In politics, representatives of several circles aim at a reorganisation of the development regions, while in geography the first extensive empirical investigations have only just begun. The concept affects at the same time the meaning and function of the regions. The changing content of the regional system, irrespective of the regionalisation methods, are accompanied by economic, social, political and cultural impulses of the transformation process. The influences of this process will contribute very substantially to the differences in the development of regional facets in the Romanian society.

As regards political regionalisation, the identification of development regions is defined in all phases of PAASI's model by the process of European integration. The Romanian development regions are thus the spatial expression of the progressive transformation and integration process.

The imminent integration will lead to relinquishing part of the sovereignty to the EU and it already contains the assumption that Romanians must accept that the State is not their exclusive property (Capelle-Pogăcean, 1998). This integration is at the same time marked by the fact that the EU could not elaborate a unitary model of regionalisation, an explanation for which are the different Constitutions and state structures. Regionalisation becomes stronger if the legitimacy of the state loses ground and is used by the state in support of the democracy theory as a means for the recovery of democratic legitimacy (Gruber, 1999). I do not see however a serious legitimacy issue in the case of the Romanian state, although the vertical and horizontal integration (social, respectively regional units) did not succeed completely (Capelle-Pogăcean, 1998). This was an important reason why Romania rejected all regional initiatives before 1996 (Fati, 1999) and used regionalisation as a means of democratisation. A further reason is the strengthening of the nationalistic discourse after the regime change and until 1996, when a compromise was found for the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation: the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) became a government party, after 1996 several international documents were signed and ratified by Romania, the new laws

regarding local administration (the use of the language allowed in administration and justice) and education also contributed to the fact that the DAHR had to redefine its political identity and abandoned the principle of territorial autonomy. Besides, it cannot be forecasted under which circumstances regionalism will lead to separatism, or, in other words, how strongly a state should be regionalised so that separatism does not occur. As demonstrated by the voting pattern, Transylvania is not a problematic region. It plays a key role in the reintegration of Romania into the European structures and in the democratisation of Romanian society.

As a consequence of regionalisation and because of regionalism, the region will become a strategic place and the scene of the formulation of regional political projects (Legendijk, 2001). The local and regional identities are mobilised by development coalitions (Swyngedouw, 2000), which either represent new government structures in the form of the Romanian regionalisation, designed as a partnership between local, regional and national institutions of the state, with the complete exclusion of the civil society and of the economic milieu, or emerge in the form of regional alliances between political, economical and cultural entities, as in the case of EMNT, SZNT and MPSZ in Romania.

An important question for the future is whether the Romanian state wants to strengthen the regional level or not. In a certain way, this question represents a dilemma, if we consider the fact that on the one hand the Romanian state has no experience regarding a decentralised political system, and on the other hand, political action is still shaped by stereotypes concerning the so-called “Transylvanian problem”. Regionalisation and regionalism meet on this level. In the case of Romania, our basic assumption is that the regionalisation was not prompted by an active regionalism. If regionalism would have adopted active forms and had been formulated more articulately in the public discourse in Romania, then regionalisation would have taken a different shape. However, in Romania, increasing regional power is feared to lead to progressive separatism and a more active political regionalism³, which would be nourished by the expectations and demands of the Hungarian minority. Although Romanian regionalism is present in all three dimensions (ethnic-cultural, political and economical), and the geographical and historical-cultural conditions are favourable, it usually plays a subordinated role in the public discourse. The few attempts to introduce this topic into the political culture failed, because it is reduced to the ethnical-cultural dimension and to the problem of Transylvania. The exciting fundamental question is, therefore, how the Romanian society will continue to develop its regional shape, which regionalisations will be applied and in what way, and which internal and external constraints will be decisive for the direction

³ See also Peter JORDAN (1998): “Regionalisation and decentralisation in Romania-opportunities and obstacles”.

adopted in the long run. Many further questions are related to this, namely that of democracy (formal or substantial) and that of the structure and role of the state (centralised, or different forms of the decentralised modern state). If the decentralisation will be implemented as part of the democratisation process, then we have again a very short experience with democratisation (1920-1938, since 1989), a total of 33 years in the last 85 years. A group of intellectuals took up the thesis that in view of the reform and modernisation of the state, the regional dimension should be privileged (Capelle-Pogăcean, 1998).

It may be seen as certain that the political regionalisation of the state territory has exploited the already existing regional differences to a large extent, and can thereby, paradoxically, promote regionalism in the future. The conceptual shape is changing fastly and this influences a simultaneous change in the established role of regions. The changing contents of the regional shape will probably follow the economic, social, political and cultural struggles of the transition process. The characteristics of this process are assumed to provide the essential differences in shaping the regional facets of the Romanian society. In the case of political regionalisation the emergence of development regions by all stages (territorial-, conceptual- and institutional shaping and establishment as distinct social category) is connected to the idea of European integration and compatibilisation of the Romanian society structures to those of the EU. They can be described as political projects of modernisation and „re-scaling” and are part of an adjustment strategy to changing political and economical conditions (EU enlargement). The new regions represent nothing new in terms of governance; they are reconfigurations of traditional power relationships.

It is a future question if the state will enforce the regional level or not, and the problem becomes a dilemma if we think that the Romanian state had never experienced decentralised political systems and the political action was charged with stereotypes related to the so called “Transylvanian problem” (Andreescu, 1998, Molnár, 1998), where more regional power is feared to lead to separatism and active regionalism (Jordan, 1998), juxtaposed on the claims of the most active regionalist group constituted by the Hungarian community from Romania. Therefore remains as basic question how will the Romanian society assume their regional shape, which regionalisations will be instrumentalised on the knife-edge of internal and external constraints?

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